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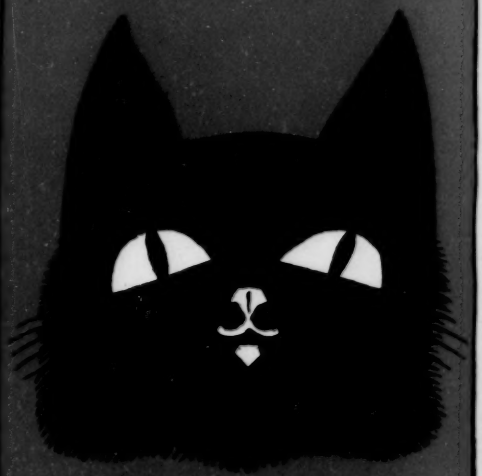

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The Man Who Is *

BY LAFAYETTE McLAWS.

THAT I should fall madly in love with Mildred Strom, the most beautiful debutante of her season, seemed to our world only natural. That she, in spite of my hunched back and dwarfed stature, should return my affection was received with horror. I agreed with my critics. Even to me the incongruity was abnormal.

When her parents, protesting against the spell which they asserted that I had thrown around her, insisted that we should neither see nor communicate with each other for a year I agreed to that also. But when they suggested sending her away I gave plain evidence of a stubbornness which they were quick to point out as being inevitably associated with my affliction.

In spite of their taunts I had my way. Since one of us must endure the loneliness of a year among strangers, I should be that one, not Mildred. This also my enemies sought to turn to my discredit by asserting that I was seeking to influence her by posing as a self-sacrificing martyr. I let that pass.

At the end of my exile if she met me at the dock all would be well between us. If she was not there I was to go my way and leave her in peace.

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"Will she be on the dock? Will she meet me?" For the first six months these questions throbbed on my brain with the dull, measured strokes of a worker husbanding his strength against a long day's effort.

Once the magical hour marking the middle of that year passed, the sluggishness disappeared. Day by day my pulse quickened until on my voyage home the throbbing became so perceptible that it produced acute physical pain.

During the last two days I could not force myself to go below even for an hour. I moved restlessly back and forth in the nose of the steamer, with my eyes irresistibly turned towards the longed-for shore. Dreading less we should be detained even for a moment I gave the captain and ship officers no peace day or night. Every time one of them came within sound of my voice I begged to be assured that nothing had happened to the machinery, that we would certainly dock on time.

When at the dawn of the last day the familiar shore stretched before my eyes a panic of fear took possession of me. If she should not be on the dock! If my year of exile had been for naught! Could I, would I, go on my way and leave her in peace? I knew that the stubbornness which was attributed to my deformity would prevent me from breaking our agreement. Where my way would lead in case she did not meet me was the thought that drove me from the deck.

Rushing below I locked myself in my cabin. There, tramping back and forth in the confined space, I struggled to force myself to face the alternative, to form some plan for the future which did not include Mildred Strom. At last I gave up the fight and with my brain on fire and my body as cold as a dead man's I crept back on deck and took up my old position forward.

The great ocean liner was steaming slowly up the bay. She passed the Statue of Liberty and glided into the blue river. The passengers had begun to crowd forward and in a dull subconscious way I listened to their remarks, taking note of all that went on around me.

A young seaman at my side attracted my attention. In a sluggish sort of way I thought admiringly of the lithe movements of his perfectly developed body. I was conscious of the suppleness

of his tattooed hands and the cunning way in which he manipulated the ropes, even with his eyes fixed on the approaching shore. Marking the lack of intelligence in his face, I thought satirically of the character of person he might be expecting to meet him on the dock. At this idea a feeling of envy electrified my brain. I asked myself what intelligence counted for against a perfect body.

The steamer's nose turned landwards, the young seaman prepared to cast his rope, the passengers pressed closer about me, the dock came into view.

There, standing quite alone on the dock, I saw her, my flower-face girl. She waved her handkerchief and I thought I caught the sound of her voice calling my name. The realization of her faithfulness caused my brain to whirl and suffused my eyes with tears. I lifted my hand to brush away the obscuring moisture.

* * * * * * *

My next conscious sensation was that of floating, far away and intangible. Then sound became detached from the general chaos that enveloped me and I heard a man's voice saying:

"— temperature of both parts is practically the same. The blood flows normally and the manufacture of tissue is resumed. The nerves alone have not fully re-established their functions."

Opening my eyes I gazed into the faces of four men. Three of them were youngish fellows and the fourth was elderly, with an expression of incredulity in his eyes. The man who had been talking, after gazing intently into my eyes for an instant, spoke to some one over his shoulder.

"Tell them both to come at once. He is awake and conscious," was what he said.

My lids sank over my eyes, though I did not lose entirely what was going on about me. A soft hand touched my brow and I opened my eyes to find the flower-like face of Mildred Strom bending over me. Almost instantly, it seemed, the face of a young woman whom I had never seen before came into view, as though she stood at my bedside opposite to Mildred.

Though my brain was too languid to distinguish their words, I was conscious of both voices speaking to me. Soothed by the

presence of my affianced wife and the evidence of her love I must have fallen asleep again, for when I next opened my eyes the scene had changed.

It was night and the tall screens that surrounded my bed shut out the artificial light that was shining somewhere to the right of me. Mildred and the strange woman were still beside me, and I was distinctly conscious of a gentle hand caressing my brow.

"Go to sleep, dearest. I am not going to leave you," Mildred whispered, touching my brow with her lips.

"Don't you get lonesome, darling. Your Mame will stick it out as long as she does," and the strange young woman gave me a sounding salute on the forehead.

How long I slept it is impossible for me even to guess, but when I awoke it was broad daylight. Mildred and the strange young woman were still at my bedside, and when I made an effort to speak Mildred placed her hand over my lips.

"Don't, dear," she pleaded. "You have been ill and the doctor has forbidden you to speak even one word until you get stronger."

"It won't be long you'll be holding your tongue, darling," the strange woman informed me, and seeing she was about to repeat the salute of the night before I attempted to turn my head away from her.

This effort, slight as it was, gave the consciousness of that peculiar detached feeling which proved so puzzling to me during the hours that followed. I felt as though I was all head. I had no sensation of possessing either body, arms, or limbs. I was a head resting on pillows, with my beloved and a strange woman beside me, but without the power of expressing either my tenderness or my indignation.

As this thought fastened itself on my weakened brain a third woman, whom I knew from her uniform to be a nurse, came into the range of my vision, bearing a cup from which Mildred fed me some liquid with a spoon. Though I saw the spoon go to my lips full and return to the cup empty, I had no sensation of swallowing. I felt nothing beyond a slight pressure on my lips. I looked at Mildred, struggling to make my eyes ask the question that she forbade my lips.

"Ask Dr. Price to come," Mildred said to the nurse.

"Tell the doctor to come at once," the strange woman cut in.

Dr. Price proved to be the youngish man who had been doing the talking when I first regained consciousness. After scrutinizing me closely for a few seconds he straightened up.

"You wish me to explain the situation to him?" he asked, including in his glance both Mildred and the strange young woman who still hovered beside my bed.

"He will understand and I am sure it will make it easier for him," Mildred replied, still keeping her hand on my brow.

I heard the strange woman's voice but I had grown so impatient of her interference and was so eager for the doctor's reply that I did not heed what she said.

"You met with an accident just as the steamer was being docked that rendered a surgical operation necessary," Dr. Price told me, speaking in the same curt tone he had used when addressing my two attendants. "The operation was successful and your complete recovery depends entirely on yourself. Under no circumstances must you attempt to move your head or speak. I also advise you not to try to think. Keep perfectly calm and sleep as much as possible."

It was fatigue as much as my desire to follow his directions that caused me to close my eyes and almost instantly fall asleep. So far as change of scene was concerned it might have been the next instant that I waked. It was still daylight, and Dr. Price was still beside me. The only difference that I could perceive was that neither Mildred nor the strange young woman were in sight.

"Good morning," Dr. Price greeted me. "You have slept just twelve hours and twenty-eight minutes. I think he deserves an extra good breakfast this morning, Miss Allen."

There was an inaudible reply from some one beyond the range of my vision, and although I did not catch the words I heard enough of the voice to be sure it was not the woman who had so mysteriously interfered between Mildred and me. A few seconds later the nurse who had brought my first supply of food appeared with a bowl and spoon. Dr. Price did the feeding. The sensation of pressure on my lips was perhaps a trifle more positive, but there was still no consciousness of swallowing or of taste.

"I will ask you to close your eyes for a moment," Dr. Price

said to me, after having administered the last spoonful of liquid. "I wish to use a powerful light to examine your throat. Shut your eyes, please."

As I lowered my lids I felt the pressure as though a damp towel was placed gently but firmly over my eyes and brow. This was followed by a slight sensation of something brushing my lips. Then there was a sharp wrench, the quick removal of the pressure from my lips, followed by excruciating pain as though the lining of my throat had been torn out. My teeth came together and I felt my lips meet. For the first time I realized that ever since I regained consciousness my mouth had been standing open.

The choking sensation that followed the removal of the obstruction from my mouth and throat was partially alleviated by my involuntarily swallowing a soft oily liquid, administered by means of a tube slipped between my lips. Before I could utter the cry that rose in my throat the towel was removed and I found myself gazing into Dr. Price's eyes, with the faces of the three men who had surrounded me when I first regained consciousness peering over his shoulders.

"Not a word. Not a thought. Thirty minutes of absolute rest and then you may both think and speak," Dr. Price said, shaking a finger at me in emphasis.

I closed my eyes, and I think but for the smarting sensation in my throat I might have fallen asleep. If there were sounds or movements I took no notice of them. I was aware only of my throat and the sensation of swallowing now and then.

"Your thirty minutes is up. You may open your eyes." It was Dr. Price, and I found him still bending over me. "You may speak just one word, then complete silence for twenty-four hours. Remember, only one word."

Still holding up his finger he moved beyond the reach of my eyes and the faces of Mildred Strom and the strange young woman took his place simultaneously.

"Mildred!" I exclaimed, speaking the name that had been in my thought for so long.

With a toss of her head and an exclamation that sounded like indignation the strange woman disappeared and left Mildred alone beside me.

"I am so thankful it was my name, dearest," Mildred murmured, and as she kissed and stroked my brow I saw that tears streamed over her face. "I have been praying that you would give some sign. I am so thankful."

Too happy at these evidences of her love to puzzle over her words, or even at the strange behavior of the young woman, I soon fell asleep. On waking the thought of being only a head lying comfortably on pillows again impressed itself on my mind. When I was next fed, however, I noticed a great change. I then knew that I was being fed on beef broth, alternated with milk in which there was a taste of raw egg. The broth needed salting, and the eggs were unpleasantly raw, but as Mildred was feeding me I would gladly have swallowed sawdust or molten lead.

The next morning, after I had taken my breakfast, Dr. Price made his appearance. On making what appeared to me a most thorough examination of my mouth and throat he seemed particularly pleased, and said to Mildred:

"I congratulate you, Miss Strom. Within a month we will have him well and on his feet again, as straight and strong as any man."

Mildred's only reply was a look of supreme joy flashing through the tears that filled her eyes.

"You may ask five questions now, Mr. Harvey, and at six o'clock this evening if your throat continues to improve as I expect it will you will be allowed five more," the doctor said, as he stepped back where I could see him. "Be careful, Miss Strom, only five questions."

"Don't waste your precious questions asking about me, dearest," Mildred cautioned, as she bent and kissed me. "I am perfectly well, have been ever since you left, and as soon as you are well and strong again I shall be perfectly happy. Do you wish me to tell you about your friends?"

"No, about the accident. Were many hurt?" I asked, and but for the sensation of speaking I never should have known my voice, it was so gruff and strange.

"No, only you and — and a seaman. It was just as the steamer was being docked and —"

"I remember the fellow," I interrupted. "He had a strange

mark on his left hand, a sort of tattoo. Was the poor devil much hurt?"

"Y — e — e — s, I think — I'm sure — "

"My darling!" I exclaimed, terrified by the pallor that had suddenly overspread her face. "You are ill. You have been — "

"Miss Strom, Dr. Price's five questions included sentences." It was the nurse. "The patient has been talking quite long enough."

"Shut your eyes and try to sleep, dearest," was Mildred's reply, as she stooped and kissed my brow. "I am perfectly well. This evening at six you are to have five more questions. Try to sleep, sweetheart." And again she sealed my lips with a kiss.

Through the conversation allowed me that evening I learned that both my parents and Mildred's had visited me during the period of my unconsciousness, but now Dr. Price thought it better for them to wait until I was stronger. The doctor further informed me that the reason I had no sensation of possessing either body or limbs was because of the plaster jacket which encased my neck and shoulders.

"We are straightening your spine. When you get up you will be as straight and strong as any man," he assured me.

"When will the plaster jacket be removed?" I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"As soon as the nerves re-establish their functions. I shall begin to use electricity to-morrow," he replied.

"— temperature of both parts practically the same. The blood flows normally and the manufacture of tissue is resumed," I said, quoting the words I had overheard the moment of regaining consciousness. "What are the two parts to which you referred?" I asked.

As he hesitated I involuntarily raised my eyes to Mildred. She was as white as a sheet.

"Your head and shoulders, Mr. Harvey," the doctor answered, checking my exclamation about Mildred's appearance in my throat. "Straightening the spine of a man as old as yourself is an unusual operation. There was a probability of its proving injurious to both your body and your head."

Though listening to Dr. Price, I had kept my eyes fastened on

the pale face of the girl beside me. At the doctor's reply an expression of relief settled on her face and I noticed the blood beginning to return to her cheeks and lips. The thought of a mysterious fear on her part brought back to my mind the strange woman. More than ever I was sure she was not a nurse. Yet if she was not, who was she and why was she beside me when my own mother was excluded? If she was a nurse what did she mean by kissing me? I fell asleep with the determination to ask about the woman the first question in the morning.

When the morning came this question, along with several others that I had planned to ask, was brushed from my mind by the early appearance of Dr. Price. True to his word he began treating me with electricity.

These treatments came three times a day. On each occasion Dr. Price was attended by several other men, whom I learned from Mildred were surgeons interested in my case. I was turned over like a log. At least I know my head was turned over and I was told my body turned with it. Beyond the few words dropped by the surgeon and the nurses I had no means of knowing what took place. So far as sensations went I still possessed neither body nor limbs.

As I made no effort to keep account of these treatments, I do not know how long it was before the consciousness of being something more than a head returned to me. I only recall that the change came about one morning when Dr. Price was accompanied by several surgeons, none of whom I had ever seen before. At his first application of the battery there was such a keen pain in the small of my back that I uttered an involuntary cry of remonstrance.

Dr. Price, who was giving the treatment, after one swift glance into my face, straightened up and turned to the men looking on.

"The nerves are re-established! Gentlemen, we have revolutionized surgery!" he exclaimed, and I had never seen a human face express such supreme satisfaction.

Instantly the surgeons closed around my bed, their faces stamped with the keen, intent expressions of hunting dogs on the trail. Though the consciousness of my body and limbs was as intangible as a shadow, there could be no mistake about my possessing all

that nature gives to man. As the new sensation became more defined my perception of what was passing on around me returned to normal and I caught the sound of a woman sobbing.

"Mildred," I called, and quite involuntarily I exerted my strength and turned on my side, facing the direction from which the sound proceeded.

"How long are you going to keep me tied up here like a log?" I demanded of Dr. Price, made indignant by the realization of my helplessness.

"After you have had a few hours' rest and have taken your mid-day nourishment we will remove the plaster jacket, Mr. Harvey," he replied, still smiling, and actually rubbing his hands with satisfaction. "I will ask you to see that he goes to sleep and takes his nourishment, Miss Strom," he added, as he placed a chair by my bedside. Then bowing to Mildred, and still smiling and rubbing his hands, he disappeared.

That afternoon the jacket was removed and for the first time I was able to turn my head and look about me. Though my neck felt a little sore and decidedly stiff, I was not aware of any other unusual sensations with that particular section of my anatomy. At Dr. Price's request I went through various contortions, raising my feet and stretching my arms. In this I was logy and stiff, feeling pretty much as though I had taken a hard day's tramp through the mountains after having been confined in the city for several months.

"That will pass," Dr. Price assured me, after I had explained just as near as words can how I felt. "In a day or so you will be able to sit up and in the course of a week or so to walk out of here as straight and well as any man."

The next morning when they propped me up among my pillows my first desire was to see myself. Though I was still feeling pretty weak and a bit dizzy, I expressed my wish to Mildred as she hovered about me, taking every precaution against a possible discomfort. A mirror large enough to give me a view of my head and body to the waist line was brought and set on the foot of my bed.

I don't recall anything unusual about my feelings on this occasion except my supreme satisfaction at seeing that my back

was indeed as straight as Dr. Price had prophesied. Perhaps the next feature that struck me was the breadth of my shoulders, and I remarked on it to Dr. Price.

"In straightening the spine the chest is thrown forward and the shoulders naturally appear broader," he explained, and he motioned to the nurse to remove the mirror.

It was that afternoon that I first noticed a change in my hands. While stroking Mildred's soft hair as she sat beside me I was struck by the size and awkwardness of my hands. On placing them side by side on the coverlet, I was amazed to find one of them marked in a peculiar yet strangely familiar manner.

"When could this have been done?" I asked Mildred, indicating the mark on my hand. "I haven't the slightest recollection of ever having my hand tattooed."

"Dr. Price says electricity very often leaves peculiar marks. It was necessary to use it quite a little on both your hands and chest," she replied, covering the mark with her own dainty hands.

"Well, I hope it disappears," I told her, speaking in all sincerity. "I shouldn't like to carry such hands to a dinner."

It was the next morning that the two strange people made their appearance in my room. I had been sitting up only a short while when, attracted by an unfamiliar exclamation, I glanced up to find two strangers, a middle-aged man and woman, standing beside my chair.

"Are you looking for some one, my man?" I asked. Though I was irritated to find our privacy so unceremoniously invaded, the pressure of Mildred's hand on my arm caused me to speak courteously.

"Well, sir," the man replied hesitatingly, twisting his hat between his toil-hardened hands. "Well, sir, we did come hoping to find our son Nathan. Seeing he's not here we'll bid you good day, sir."

After a respectful bow that included both Mildred and me he turned and led the woman away.

"His hands ain't changed," the woman remarked, speaking in a subdued tone as they passed out the door.

The sensation about my heart was so acute that I fell back among my pillows. I had never seen that woman before. I was

absolutely sure of it. Yet at the sound of her voice my heart — It is impossible for me to put my feelings into words, beyond stating that at the sound of that woman's voice my heart fluttered, tugged at its moorings as a bird struggling to escape from the grasp of its captor. It took all the strength out of me, and I was glad enough when Mildred called the nurse and had me put to bed.

After having my supper I fell asleep from sheer exhaustion I think. The next morning I was so much better, that at my own suggestion Dr. Price consented to my chair being rolled where I could look out of the window. Mildred had not arrived for her daily visit, and the nurse, after making me comfortable, went out of the room, leaving me to amuse myself watching the passing in the street.

Expecting Mildred every minute, on hearing a movement near the door I looked around. The same middle-aged man was just entering the room, and behind him came the young woman who had acted so mysteriously while attending me during the first days of my consciousness.

"Ha, ha," she laughed, on catching my eye. "So you are setting up are you? Well, I've brought back your letters," she added, tossing a dirty-looking package on the floor at my feet. "You may tell her she can have you and welcome. No such looking dough-face for mine."

I have no consciousness of anything further until I awoke in bed, with Dr. Price and Mildred sitting beside me, and my father and mother standing together at the foot.

"What was it?" I asked the surgeon. "Who was that woman? Why does my heart — "

"After you have taken your nourishment and had a few hours' complete rest — " Dr. Price began. with the same old formula.

"No, he must be told now," my mother interrupted, speaking very positively. She had come up and was standing with her hand resting on Mildred's shoulder. "He will never rest until his mind is relieved. He is my child and I know what I am talking about."

I smiled at her gratefully, for she did indeed know.

"Before answering your question, Mr. Harvey, it will be necessary for me to give you a short history of your case," Dr. Price

began. "To begin with, let me ask you if you have any recollection of a young seaman who was standing next you at the time of your accident?"

"Yes, I remember him distinctly. His left hand was —" Here a thought flashed into my mind and hesitating I glanced down at my own hands. "Do you mean that you amputated his hands and grafted them on to me?" I cried, my amazement almost suffocating me.

Dr. Price placed his hands on both my shoulders and looked me squarely in the eyes.

"Hold hard," he cautioned. "I beg you to control yourself, Mr. Harvey." After a moment, in which I did succeed, in a measure at least, in regaining my composure, he added: "I grafted on his whole body."

I stared at him without power either to speak or feel.

"That young seaman's head was crushed, mutilated beyond recognition. Your body was beyond the hope of a surgeon's skill. I grafted his body on your head." Here he grasped my hands in both his own, his face beaming with enthusiasm. "Man, do you realize that I have succeeded? Do you realize what that success means?"

"Those women?" I whispered. "Who are those two women?"

"The seaman's mother and the seaman's sweetheart," he answered.

"It was necessary to gain their consent to use his body, my son," my mother told me, answering the question that took shape in my mind. "Before giving their consent they stipulated that the young woman should share the nursing with Mildred. One was not to appear in your sight without the other. If on regaining consciousness you recognized one, the other was to leave. Your father and I had to agree that the old man and old woman were to see you whenever we did. On your regaining consciousness they were to see you before we did."

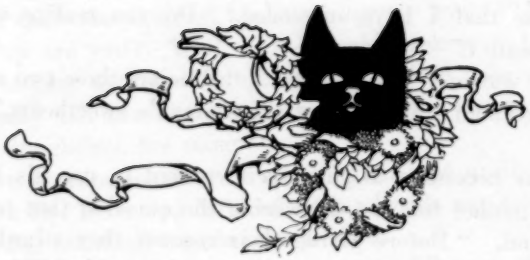
"You see they believed that the body being so much larger than the head the personality of the young seaman would dominate," Dr. Price explained. "As yours is absolutely the first case of this sort, Mr. Harvey, none of us could foretell just which man you would be."

"Never mind, doctor," my mother told him, placing her hand caressingly on my brow. "What concerns us now is the man who is. And he is my son."

I turned to Mildred.

"Yes," she said, smiling into my eyes, "it is the man who is."

Knowing how she would have ended her sentence had we been alone, I was content.



A Day at the Races.*

BY CHARLES WISNER BARRELL.

Y wife's brother Henry, a staid, sanctimonious person who believed in the efficacy of family prayers and occasionally led the services at downtown rescue missions, had suddenly blossomed into a figure of romantic but rather unholy interest by winning five hundred dollars on the ponies at Sheepshead Bay. A wire-tapper, under obligations to him in a business way, had let him in on a hundred to one shot. And Henry, with a Scotsman's canny instinct in material matters, had decided that this was the psychological moment for an educational fling at the devil's game. But when he brought his winnings home he neglected to mention the wire-tapper's contributing share in his good fortune, and left his apparently scandalized but secretly envious friends and relatives to credit the easily acquired increment to his own clairvoyant shrewdness in picking a winner.

Never mind how I learned of the wire-tapper's tip. It was too late to do *me* any good, anyway.

One evening, not long after Henry's unusual exploit, as I sat before the fire, my wife came and draped the arm of my chair with her decorative person. By and bye she began to comb my hair with her fingers. And I began to speculate silently and rapidly on which of my various unfulfilled promises she proposed to bring up for reconsideration. I knew from experience that this little haircombing business usually preceded some such reminder. Finally a soft voice began to purr in my ear.

"No — o — w, Jim — "

"Yes, dear," I returned in glib defiance of the visions of unpurchased Parisian hats, pony-skin coats, new parlor carpets, and bedroom suits which swirled across my memory.

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"Jim — won't you — couldn't you — now — arrange to take me down to the races some day this week?"

The unexpectedness of the request knocked me all a-heap. Finally I managed to gasp:

"My dear Patty — you don't mean to say that *you*, a God-fearing church-member — "

"Well, why not?" Her lips began to gather themselves into a childish pout.

"Because," I quoted, "it's the devil's own game — "

"But," she came back at me, "isn't it our duty to strive to overcome the devil?"

"At his own tricks? It's a dangerous and expensive form of amusement. And your argument is Machiavelian sophistry of the crudest, most barbarous kind — "

A determined little hand shut off my flow of oratory, and two wide-pupiled blue eyes trained themselves on mine at close quarters.

"That'll be about all, Mr. Demosthenose. Now listen to *me*. I'm tired of the palaver that Henry's wife has been getting off about their 'windfall' and Henry's matchless brilliancy in beating the bookfakers, or whatever you call them. And I'd just like to take a few kinks out of her complacency. So I want you to take me down there — " I tried to interpose a sentence, but she rattled on resolutely " — take me down there, and let me show her that — that — Now, Jim, don't interrupt me." She shook her glossy auburn pomp with unrestrained earnestness. "And I'll be generous and good-natured. I won't even mention that trip to the Adirondacks which is now four months overdue, or the pony-skin coat you had me measured for, or that bird's-eye maple bedroom suit — "

"'Nough! 'nough!" I yowled. "Just see how the insidious poison of the track has already worked its way into our happy domestic circle! But rather than allow the suggestion of a difference to come between us Patty, dear, I claim the privilege of being generous and good-natured myself. Despite the fact that I am familiar with your record as a prize-taker at grab-bag socials, bridge parties, ping-pong and euchre tournaments, I shall avail myself of the pleasure of escorting you down to Brighton

Beach this coming Thursday, and of spending not less than twenty of my hard-earned dollars in showing you the evils of envy and of gambling. So now that's settled, and you'll have plenty of time to look through the *Ladies' Home Companion* to see how to make your hobble-skirt over into a winter coat, for I really have laid twenty bones away toward surprising you with that pony-skin thing when you weren't looking."

"U — uh! You horrid, cynical old tight-wad!" she rapped out, a variety of inflections running down the syllables. Clutching me by the neck, she shook me back and forth. Then suddenly dropping her hands she buried her Titian mop under my ear. "Yes, you're a horrid, cynical old tight-wad, but in spite of all I love you still."

A man has to expect occasional performances of this character when he takes unto himself a red-haired chit of a girl with a Peter Pan disinclination to grow up.

Thursday noon Patty met me at the office, and after a light luncheon we set forth for Brighton. Before the train started I took out my wallet for a final inventory of its contents.

"Here are the verdant twenty," I said, running through the sheaf. "I had 'em changed into nice new one-spots so as to give as many bookies as possible a bite. If the unexpected should happen and we retain the price of a dinner, we can stop at the big hotel on the beach and listen to the band. Otherwise it will have to be the old Harlem trail for ours and the finish of that cold leg of mutton."

But Patty only smiled, ignoring my fatuous persistence in displaying the wet blanket.

"Tell me how to bet," she cooed ingenuously.

"Why, women don't bet," I said. "That is, they don't get down and hustle and tussle in the vulgar, steaming ring and personally hand over their contributions to the bookmakers. They find obliging men to perform those functions for them — just as I'm going to do for you this afternoon."

"Yes, but — how can they tell which horses to choose?"

"Usually," I replied, "a lady waits until the entries are paraded past the grand-stand on the way to the wire, and she chooses the horse that seems to have the prettiest curve to his

neck, or the cutest jockey on board. Men are less esthetic. They read reams of silly dope, bribe stable-boys for inside information, get unfortunate wire-tappers under their thumbs — "

I was interrupted by a hearty crack on the shoulder, and looked around to see the cheery face of Bob Herrman smiling down on me. I had become acquainted with Bob when he was a Stone Street curb-broker, and we had spent many happy evenings together in the days before I had met Patty. Since then I'd learned he had taken a small interest in a firm of bookmakers and spent most of his time at the tracks. He was mighty good company, though, and I lost no time in turning back the vacant seat before us, and introducing him to Patty. He kept us both in a radiant glow of good humor with his reminiscences of life and adventure on curb and turf during the journey oceanward.

I ensconced Patty in a good seat where she could see enough to make even her lively red head buzz. Then I sought the betting ring for the first race.

It's extraordinary how quickly the fever gallops through the blood when one is exposed to the contagion. I can honestly say that I entered the grounds of the Brighton Racing Association that afternoon with no more interest in "the sport" than the average English Channel sea-gull shows in an aeroplane these days. But five minutes later I was jostling my way among pikers and plungers in the brick-paved court, gripping my program with desperate eagerness, eyes and ears drinking in the cineomatograph panorama and the raucous babel like a lost stag scenting his native heather.

"Five to one on Powder Puff!" a leather-throated individual was yelling. "Even money for place — " "Hey! Let me have a look at that dope-sheet — " "You're dotty, man! She couldn't do five furlongs in that time, not if Barney Oldfield was — " "Look-a-here, boss, I've got the only *real* thing that'll be put over to-day — " "And if I'd only played my own selections yesterday — " "Surest thing you know! I saw the marks of the needle on his leg myself — " "Ten to one on Salamander for a place — "

Almost before I realized it, I had laid five dollars on Powder Puff, to win, and was romping back through the jam with a pair

of rented field-glasses to let Patty watch them line up at the barrier. I met Bob Herrman hurrying out of the lower tier as I entered the grand-stand, stuffing a big handful of bills into his little valise and reaching for his entry book with the other hand.

Patty's face was flushed, and her blue eyes shone wider than usual.

"Isn't it just lovely and exciting!" she cried. "I don't wonder Henry — Ah! A pair of opera-glasses! Let me look quick, Jim! I hope that black horse with the white feet wins. He's just like Uncle Tom's old saddle-horse on the farm. What's his name — Salamander? Sounds like one of those Bible kings. You put some money on him, didn't you, Jimmie?"

"No," I replied, "I didn't. I played the skinny little sorrel runt with the white nose. Sentimental associations are best left out of account in picking a winner. They're — ah — no — yes — they're off!"

It was a stirring contest, with all the conventional accompaniments of yelling, dancing spectators, flying dust, blazing sunlight, crashing music — and the usual finish, with the favorite Powder Puff fighting hard to maintain third place. Salamander showed a good nose ahead of the bunch, but when the steward's sign went up it was to award the race to the despised and rejected old selling-plater Golightly, with Salamander second, and Powder Puff not even in the money.

Well, I'll spare you detailed description of the succeeding events of that afternoon. Let it suffice to say that by the time the last race was announced my roll had dwindled to two lone dollar bills. And I entered the betting-ring with blood in my eye, having settled upon a choice by the ingenious method of closing my eyes and dropping a dime on the program at random. The coin fell squarely upon the name of Hal Harmony, and I felt reassured of the wisdom of my *modus operandi* when I saw Phil Mitchell, the plunger, squeeze in ahead of me at the booky's stand and lay two fifty-dollar notes on the Harmony horse at eighteen to one.

Dazed and satiated with the noisy, colorful riot that surged around her, Patty had long since subsided into a dreamy semi-

trance, like a backwoodsman at a three-ring circus. She didn't even bother to announce her favorites any more, and only smiled in a far-off manner when she saw me go through the mystic rite of selecting Hal Harmony.

Down at the bottom of my program I had noticed the name of that old enemy of society, Sugarman, who had betrayed half the pikers in the Western World — and incidentally stung me for a month's savings — the previous spring, when he had run fifth in the Metropolitan Handicap. Since that historic event he had not even shown in the money. And I thanked fortune that my dime had not fallen afoul of his cognomen in its descent. As I steered a course out of the ring I noticed that the bookies, with prodigal but perfectly safe nonchalance, were offering eighty and eighty-five to one on the famous frost.

"Yes," a thick-necked individual on my right averred in a loud voice, "and they might's well make it *a hundred* and eighty-five, for there ain't three fools between here and Harlem who'd drop another markee on the blamed hearse-toter!"

It is rather painful to have to set down in black and white the finish of that last race, but I presume you have guessed it.

Sugarman won, hands down — three lengths ahead of the field, and Hal Harmony was left flat-footed at the barrier. Gloom intolerable clouded the entire landscape, and in silence I helped Patty down through the growling, scowling ranks of losers who cluttered the stand and the paddock. At the gate we ran across Bob Herrman again with his perennial smile and inextinguishable flow of gabble. I began to feel a positive antipathy to Bob.

The sun was setting in a blaze of beauty, and in from the south came stealing a cool sea-breeze, presaging an evening of ideal charm on the beach. With brutal directness I took my wife firmly by the arm and started on the double-quick for the Manhattan Express, already choked with passengers. But as we debouched on to the walk leading to the enticing environs of the big hotel, she came to a stop.

"Come on," I said, "no sad sea-waves and oyster omelettes for us to-night, my girl. In our present state, cold mutton is the only fitting repast —"

"But, Jim, listen. I want —"

"You want a seat in that train, first and foremost, child. After that — "

"I want you to come over to the hotel with *me* — both you and Mr. Herrman — as my *guests*."

My jaw began to loosen. "But you don't understand, dear. It's not a charitable institution. Meals run from three dollars up, over there."

"I don't care if they do, old Mother Hubbard!" she returned saucily. "And now — just to reassure you that I'll be able to meet my obligations — "

She unsnapped her hand-bag and drew forth a pile of yellow-backs so thick that her small hands could not begin to encompass it.

"Just run through that, please."

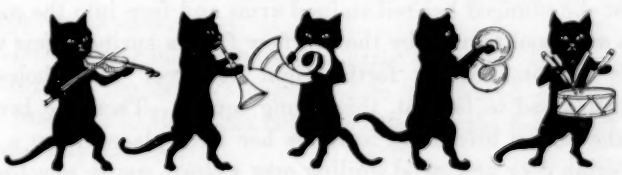
With trembling fingers and bated breath I did so. Eight hundred and Fifty Dollars!

"But — but — Patty — where did you find this wad?"

"Ask Mr. Herrman that," she returned naively. "I told him to put a dollar on Salamander for me in the first race, and then I took the ten I'd won that way and put it all on Sugarman — "

"Sugarman! How — why?"

"Because he looked so nice and gentle, and I heard a man in the seat behind me say that he'd stop *any time* to eat a piece of candy if it was offered him."



The Watcher in the Sky.*

BY EDWARD ALEXANDER PHILLIPS.

A BUZZARD wheeled in the upper blue. Its searching gaze pierced to the farthest reaches of heat-gleaming plain and blistered foothill. It was a comprehensive quest, now sweeping wide the hot monotony of level sand, now driving into the dark depths of sagey sink and rocky canyon. Away off there in the west, there where the scrub oaks grow, a sluggish, yellow creek crawled hesitatingly from the hills, till, awed by the weltering waste beyond, it dove quickly into the earth, to rise no more. There the eye of the searcher in the sky rested.

Stretched in the sparse shade of a ragged oak, a man looked through the heat-quivering space and followed the bird's flight, first lazily, then with rising interest, then with rapt resentment. The cursed thing was looking straight at him; and down through the desert stillness there was borne to him a gloating croak. He sprang to his feet, angry, raging.

"I'll git you one o' these days — er you'll git me," he said.

Back at the base of the hills, where the creek crawled out to be swallowed by the thirsty desert, a cabin stood; and in the hot, moist sands a young squaw dug and hoed and planted. Noting now the man's approach from his retreat under the shady scrubs, she glanced at the sun, dropped her tools and set about preparing for his dinner.

First she plunged her toil-stained arms and face into the cooling depths of a pool formed by the overflow from a spring a few yards up the canyon, coming forth bright and cool and wholesome. She wasn't bad to look at, this young squaw. Then she brought from the pool a brimming bowl for her lord, placed it on a stool at the cabin door and stood smiling over a clean, coarse towel which

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she held for him. She had smiled upon him often thus, hoping to win a smile in return. She was disappointed this time, as usual. Lafe Tucker wasn't of the smiling sort.

But he had known how to smile a year before, when he arrived at the county seat, twenty miles away. Hadn't he though! Coming from nowhere more definite than "out Missouri way," he found his new environment so satisfying that he smiled at everybody, at all times and under all circumstances. He smiled so broadly and so persistently when there was no apparent reason for it that his exaggerated good cheer became a public nuisance. It got on people's nerves.

What made his everlasting smile worse was a cumbrous, knowing wink which he never failed to fasten upon all who favored him with a glance of recognition. This wink was a false alarm. It was a lie. It proclaimed that he, Lafe Tucker, was a being of superior intelligence. He wasn't. All he knew was how to lean up against the courthouse fence and whittle, and occasionally poke the farmers' dogs out from under their wagons and set them fighting. When offered work he'd parry the proposition with that exasperating wink, and go on whittling. They got to calling him "Ornery" Lafe, and he did his best to live up to the title.

One day Judge Barlow handed down a curbstone decision to the effect that Lafe Tucker's presence was a menace to the peace and quiet of the community, inasmuch as that wink of his was calculated to inspire the wink*ee* with the desire, if not the actual right, to slay the wink*or*. Then the sheriff took a hand, and, in that impressive way of his, pointed out to Lafe the benefits derivable from travel. A week afterwards he "took up" with the prettiest squaw in the hills and went to live with her out at Moccasin Creek sink.

The Indian girl had fashioned a little farm out of the rocky patch there at the desert's edge, and to this haven she led her white "husband." He would help her build for the future. Their happiness was assured.

No, Lafe Tucker wasn't of the smiling sort — not now. There wasn't any need for it. It didn't get him anything. It had cost him all the effort of which he was capable to smile and wink his

way into the good graces of "Jinnie." That's what he called her, for a pet name, for that was the name of a mule he used to work with when he held the position of "off-bearer" in a Missouri brickyard. Yes, he had *earned* Jinnie's toilsome and self-sacrificing devotion — she owed it to him. Nor, as she had early discovered, was he of the sort that builds for the future. The very idea of taking thought for the morrow gave him poignant pain. He was the liliest lily of the field.

It was This that Jinnie loved, for whom she toiled — toiled willingly, for ever in her heart there stirred the hope that some day her devotion would break the barrier of his sullen indifference and force the show of affection for which she hungered. But as the months went by indifference became contempt, contempt grew to open, profane rebellion against her advances. Then hope nearly died. Still she toiled on, supported by the thought that she had him there, all to herself. No one could take him from her.

He had fallen sick and she had nursed him, tenderly, tenderly. She had bathed him and soothed him when the fever was on, and watched over him through the long days and nights. Once when he had been very low, too weak to move, so far advanced into "the valley of the shadow" as to refuse to help her by even so much as a wish to return, she had slipped away and run twenty miles through the night to consult the medicine man at Ukiah, and get the "good drug" to make him well again; and she had run back, every step of the weary way, and reached his bedside in time to catch the parting strands of the thread of life, and hold him through the crisis. Then, with the breath of love, she had coaxed the flickering vital spark to linger, then to glow, then to flame until the pulses leaped and the eyes shone with returning strength. When he was well again she had led him to his retreat in the scrub oak shade and returned to her drudgery, happy — almost.

The squaw-man tossed the towel over the back of a chair and turned towards the cabin door. Jinnie faced him, beaming. There was something in her attitude of smiling banter which woke his ire.

"Cut out that damned grinnin'," he commanded. "It don't

git you nothin'. Cut it out." He noted, as she faced him, that she held her hands behind her in an odd way. "What the h—— "

"S'prise for my boy," she smirked.

"Surprise? What d' you mean? Show me."

"You know what day it is, Lafe, my boy?"

"What day? Naw. What day is it?"

"One year to-day — you know — you say you love — I say I love — well, we marry."

"What of it? What you got there?" The hands came from concealment, each holding a glass of liquor.

"Jinnie knows what her boy likes — I save it for long time and count the days, so we can drink together, this day. You be happy — I be happy. We drink — to love. You love me sometime — sometime you kiss me — yes?" The sight of the whiskey nearly caused him to forget himself — he almost smiled. Grasping the glass held toward him, he gulped the contents.

"Got any more?" he demanded.

"No more," she answered, with a pretty pout of regret. "Only two — one for you — one for me — to drink this day — for lov—— " Before she could carry the glass to her lips he snatched it from her hand and tossed the fiery liquid into his gullet.

"Whiskey no good for Injun. Bad — bad. What you got to eat? Hustle up the grub."

The woman turned to her cooking, and lingered over it, silently. Silently she served her master. As she moved about to attend his wants, a smile was again upon her face. It was not the playful, luminous smile of a while ago. It was set and hard. It was the smile of a mask. He must not see how he had hurt her.

"I'm goin' over to the gulch this afternoon," he announced, when he had feasted. "Dig up that biled shirt o' mine."

"Oh, Lafe, please — please — "

"Dig it up. I'll be back 'long about midnight."

She knew much of what his going to "the gulch" meant, and feared more. It was a little settlement a few miles back in the hills where squaw-men and other "characters," male and female, met at odd times for drunken revel. She knew some of the Indian women and girls who went there to meet the men and join in their

orgies. One she knew particularly, an unusually pretty girl whose charms she had heard Lafe extol. She didn't like to think of this girl.

* * * * * * *

It was an hour before daylight when the matted undergrowth above the gulch parted and a pair of black eyes peered down into the circle of light about a smouldering camp fire. Men and women sprawled upon the ground, asleep. After a careful survey, the watcher in the thicket slipped silently into the light and made the round of the sleepers. The man she sought was not there. Neither was the girl of whom she couldn't bear to think.

Taking up a blazing brand, she studied the ground about the various trails leading up into the hills. At one of these hill paths she lingered long, bending low over the beaten earth. When she straightened up her face told that the last spark of hope had just died out of her heart. She tottered to a near-by boulder and leaned against its jagged side, her face buried in her hands. For minutes she remained thus; then, suddenly drawing herself up, standing erect and giving her head a prideful toss that shook the raven hair in showers about her shoulders, she gazed with blazing eyes along the trail that led over the hills, desertward. Slowly, silently, she parted the tangled growth above the path, and disappeared.

* * * * * * *

Dawn stole through the thicket at the desert's edge and found them there, the maiden and the man. Her dusky cheek aflame, her jet eyes gleaming mischief, she opposed to his clumsy, coarse caress the resistance which invites. Panting with passion, he caught the laughing face between his hands and drew it close. He bent to kiss her and, as their lips met, a sharp shock gripped his heart and his ears rang with an echoing din. The girl, terror-struck, sprang from his embrace and fled. Above a half-hidden rock across the canyon a puff of white smoke floated, lazily.

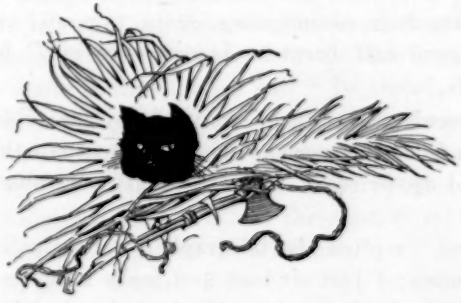
He got up and reeled out into the open. His chest was icy cold. His legs all but failed him. Along under the scrawny oaks which fringed the desert's rim he stumbled — toward home. Quaking fear possessed him. He clutched at his breast with shaking hands. Blood oozed between his fingers.

He reached the old retreat under the scrub oaks and, sinking, exhausted to his knees, gazed across the open space to the cabin. From the door an Indian woman came, hooded and outfitted as for a journey. As she stepped from the cabin a volume of smoke burst through the open door and window and, seemingly in an instant, the little home was wrapped in flames. He called to her, but she strode away with stately step in the opposite direction, giving no heed either to the blazing cabin or to his agonizing cries.

"Jinnie! Jinnie!" he cried. "Help me — I'm dying!" but the muffled figure did not falter. He saw the hills swallow her up.

He managed to rise, but his strength was gone. He staggered back to where the scorching sands met the shadows of the oaks — staggered and fell, face upward. And the last look of his glazing eyes followed the circlings of a black object high up there in the cloudless sky.

"You win, damn you!" was all he said.



"Durb" and Destiny.*

BY DONALD A. KAHN.

DURBIN, the telegraph editor, could take news off the wire, edit it to conform to the paper's policy, put it on a typewriter, hold a fairly coherent conversation with a casual visitor, and smoke a corn-cob pipe, all at one and the same time. This made him a valuable member of the newspaper staff as well as a congenial man to have around the office.

One afternoon, as Durbin was taking and typing a column story on a three-legged calf born in Jasper township, and discussing, between paragraphs, the details of a local burglary with Jenks, the police reporter, Edison, the managing editor, stepped into the little coop that served for the telegraph editor's room and joined in the conversation.

"What's that you're taking?" he asked Durbin. "Anything for the six o'clock extra?" Durbin jammed the tobacco down in his cob, slipped a fresh sheet of copy paper into his typewriter, and spat on the floor, commencing, again, to pound away.

"Three-legged calf born in Jasper township," he responded, between puffs.

"For heaven's sake, Durb, cut it!" objected Edison. "This is the fourth freak that correspondent has sent out this week. He must be hard up, or crazy. Can't you give us something decent, Durb?"

"Of course," replied the telegrapher, sarcastically. "I don't receive the news; I just sit here and make it up as I go along." Good-natured Jenks, he of the police beat, laughed in appreciation of the nightly sally between the telegrapher and his superior.

During a lull on the wire Durbin chanced to glance above him to where part of a stereotype mat, a likeness of King Edward,

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patched a hole in the glass partition. The mat suggested to him the idea of fixing up a bogus message and roping Edison in on it. Just as the editor was ready to send it to the composing-room, he would put him wise and enjoy a laugh. He winked at Jenks. The clicking of the telegraph receiver commenced once more. It was additional data on the three-legged calf, but the managing editor was unfamiliar with the Morse code. Durbin pulled at his corn-cob with assumed excitement.

"Hello!" he shouted to Edison. "Here you are! London cablegram says King Fredrick of Graustark, has kicked the bucket!"

"Just in time for the extra!" rejoiced the managing editor, biting like a fish. "Considerate of him." He leaned over Durbin's shoulder, gulping down the "details" as the telegrapher punched them out on the machine. Durb's imagination and the accompanying typewriter had just reached the matter of funeral arrangements when he was hurridly called to the telephone by the copy boy. During the moment he was talking Jenks was sent out to cover a hold-up.

"My house on fire!" screamed Durb, rushing from the phone. Grabbing his hat he was out the door and down the street before any one could stop him.

Barton, Durbin's assistant, was summoned from the files room and put in charge of the instrument.

"Get the rest of King Fredrick," ordered the editor.

For a moment Barton listened to the dots and dashes. "It's something about a three-legged calf," he stated.

"T'ell with the calf!" exclaimed Edison, impatiently. "We want the rest of the funeral stuff for the extra. Break in on them."

Following instructions, Barton interrupted, and demanded more on the royal funeral. But the sender, taking the request as a joke, threatened to fine the operator.

"Let 'em go!" decreed Edison. "We've got enough to fill a page anyway."

In an incredibly short time Durbin's fake on the death of the Danish monarch was set on the linotypes, cast by the stereotypers, and screwed to the presses. With pictures of the king, the story, red-inked, monopolized the entire first page of the extra edition.

Of course no other paper carried this "news." Durbin's had all of its contemporaries "scooped." Edison congratulated himself on what he took to be the superiority of his telegraph and cable service. The entire edition, in the hands of the lively newsboys, sold out in a few moments.

"Just my chimney burned out," announced the telegraph editor, presently returning to the office. "Where's Jenks?"

"He left the same time you did," replied Edison. "Why?" Durbin turned ghastly pale.

"Did he put you wise to that Fredrick story?" he gasped.

"Sure, we got it — scooped 'em all," answered the managing editor. "Didn't you see the extra?"

"Lord!" moaned Durb. "You used that fluke!"

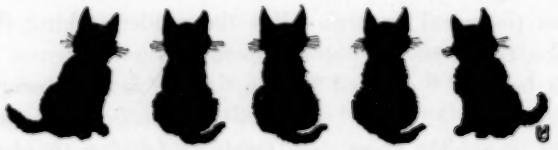
"The fire at his house put him on the blink," observed Barton, not unkindly.

Edison produced a flask and tried to force some whiskey between Durbin's resisting lips.

From the next room the telegraph instrument began to make a noise. Barton, noting Durbin's inability, ran to take charge of it. Presently he returned.

"What the devil is the matter with our wire service?" he demanded of Edison. "They're sending out a cablegram again announcing Fredrick's death. I suppose we'll learn, next week, that Columbus has discovered America."

Durbin, hearing the words, sat bolt upright in his chair and wiped beads of cold sweat from his brow. "Thank God," he exclaimed fervently.



The Earmarked Seven.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.

ON a sunny afternoon in early spring, Frank Morgan, resting upon one of the little iron settees in Jackson Square, New York City, had his daydreams disturbed by a discovery made by his eyes, which were lazily noting the happenings in the little enclosure. The discovery was a trivial one. He saw that a young woman, sitting on the next seat, had lost the upper part of her left ear, and his mind considered several reasons to account for the blemish. Morgan wondered whether it resulted from an accident or a disfigurement from birth, and, while pondering, his eyes examined the other features of the girl and he realized that she was extremely beautiful.

She was of a Jewish type, with a skin of such an intense whiteness that the red lips and large dark eyes produced a striking contrast. The hair, upon the waves of which a small toque sat jauntily, was a blue-black mass that seemed to catch and smother the golden rays of the afternoon sun, and the wonderful regularity of the other features made the ear-disfigurement more noticeable.

Morgan puzzled over the discovery for several minutes, and then, unable to find a satisfactory explanation for the deformity, he put the matter from his mind and started to build those delightful castles of fancy that Hope takes a pleasure in constructing on drowsy spring days. But once again his eyes disturbed his meditations, and on this occasion his return to the consideration of every-day facts was more immediate. With startled eyes he stared at a tall, well-dressed man who had just passed the seat he occupied, and he sat up alert and watchful. The man had the same uncommon disfigurement as the woman sitting on the next seat! *The upper part of his left ear was missing.*

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Morgan's mind put the daydreams swiftly away as he marvelled at the coincidence. One person with such a deformity would be certain to attract attention, but the coming together of two people, possessing the same identical blemish, was a happening that would make the least imaginative of men ponder over the tremendous odds that stood against such an occurrence. The coincidence was remarkable.

Morgan looked at the woman, and the expression on her face intensified his curiosity. She had also noticed the man, and the change that came suddenly over her features proved that his appearance interested her greatly. A look of extreme terror had transformed her face. The red lips dropped slowly apart, and her fear-distended eyes followed the movements of the newcomer.

The enclosed ground at Jackson Square makes a small triangle, bounded on its three sides by Eighth and Greenwich Avenues and Horatio Street. The nearly circular walk inside the enclosed area is not more than eighty yards in circumference, and Morgan, curious and startled, watched the tall person upon whom the woman's gaze was fixed. Very slowly the man walked round the park till he had completed the circle and arrived at the gate through which he had entered, and near which the woman and Morgan were sitting. Here he stood a moment, then made a right-about turn and retraced his steps, passing very close to the woman, who continued to watch him intently. At the gate he stopped again, glanced quickly around, and then stepped out into Eighth Avenue.

Morgan looked at the woman. She half rose from her seat and then sank back again as if undecided on her course of action. For a full minute she sat, with hands tightly clenched,—then she sprang up and followed the person who shared her peculiar deformity.

Morgan's curiosity had reached such a pitch that his course was decided with little reasoning. The fact that two persons minus the upper portions of their left ears were so close together was, in itself, a remarkable happening, but when to this wonderful coincidence was added the element of mystery aroused by the manner in which the man had circled the park, together with the evident terror his appearance had awakened in the mind of the

woman, the incident appeared extraordinary and showed an uncanny side that thrilled the watcher. There were no business appointments to repulse the wave of curiosity that, sweeping through his mind, urged him to take up the trail of the two, and the woman had only passed through the gate when he rose and followed.

She turned to the left, in the direction of Abingdon Square, and when Morgan reached the sidewalk he saw that the tall man was about twenty yards in advance of the woman. The man was still walking with the same leisurely stride with which he had circled the park, and from Horatio Street to the Square he gave no indication that he was aware of the fact that the woman was following. But it was plain to Morgan that the terror which the appearance of the tall person had evidently brought to the mind of the woman had not decreased. The look of horror that he saw upon her white face when a sudden block in the traffic at West Fourth Street brought him alongside her, convinced him that there was something dark and sinister in the meeting of the two, and he felt sure that the investigation of the mystery would provide a thrilling entertainment for his excitement-craving nerves.

Passing Bank Street the tall man turned his head slightly as he swung to the left into Bleecker, and at the same time he quickened his gait. The woman immediately increased her speed, so that she still maintained the distance of twenty yards between herself and her earmarked leader, and Morgan, now thoroughly satisfied that there was some mysterious bond between the two, was much elated. Quite accidentally he had discovered a mystery of high magnitude, and, while congratulating himself upon his acumen, he allowed his imagination to picture a thousand queer happenings that would reward him for his trouble.

There is little pedestrian traffic in the extreme western end of Bleecker Street, and at times there was not a single individual between the three as they moved rapidly south. The man in the lead looked neither to the right nor left, and to the eyes of the ordinary observer was seemingly blind to all about him. Following a score of yards behind was the girl, her head inclined forward, and at an equal distance behind her came the delighted Morgan. In the latter's opinion Fate had performed a kindly

action in bringing the two across his path, and he speculated joyfully on the ending.

Crossing Eleventh Street Morgan noticed that the girl, in response to another almost imperceptible signal from the man, decreased the distance separating them, and he also moved closer. The covert signal was further confirmation that the two knew one another, and the measures which they had adopted, to prevent the curious from suspecting that they were acquainted, were of a kind to breed suspicion.

Between Perry and Tenth Streets Morgan was watching the woman as she neared the middle of the block, and when he glanced ahead he was surprised to find that the man had disappeared. Astonished and annoyed, but more than ever resolved to hang on the trail of the woman, he moved still closer to her, and the movement was fortunate, as far as the successful solving of the mystery was concerned. Without slackening her speed she turned sharply to the wall of a red brick dwelling house and dived into the basement.

The swiftness of the movement surprised Morgan, and, for the moment undecided what to do, he walked rapidly past the burrow into which she had disappeared. Then, seized with a mad impulse that was little short of insanity, he turned again towards the opening.

Bleecker Street near Tenth is anything but an aristocratic neighborhood, and in that quarter abnormal curiosity is a dangerous possession, but Morgan's mind claimed the mystery and he was determined to see the end. Before he could control himself or allow his caution to make a feeble protest, he was stumbling along the dark tunnel in the basement.

"I'm here," he muttered, "and I'm going to see the thing through."

Cautiously he felt his way in the damp, evil-smelling corridor, driven along by a strange impelling force. For a moment he paused to listen, as a door closed softly at the extreme end of the passage. Then, with a pounding heart, he moved on. The woman was evidently ascending to the ground floor.

Morgan found the door and climbed up the narrow steps to the hallway, where the pile of advertising dodgers that had been

pushed under the door, was evidence that the house had been long unoccupied. The dust, lying upon the bare stairs, gave the inquisitive one more information. By the imprints he saw that some half-dozen people had ascended, and amongst the impressions he found one that convinced him the woman was of the number.

With impulsive unconcern he sprang up the stairs to the first floor, but the gloom made it impossible for him to follow the tracks along the dusty corridor. Luck was still with him, however. Peering upwards through the dimly lighted stair-well he saw a hand moving up the banister of the top flight, and with tingling nerves he crept forward. The mystery was deepening. He felt that he was close to some uncanny happening, and he hurried.

In the dark corridor on the top floor there was absolute silence when Morgan reached the head of the stairs, and he stared at the one door on the landing, through which he felt certain the woman had passed. The back door separated him from the solution which his mind hungered for, and he stood upon the top step, listening intently.

Footsteps upon the stairs startled him. Some one was coming up from below, and he looked round hastily in search of a hiding place. Espying two broad planks leaning against one end of the passage, he tiptoed quickly thither and managed to squeeze himself behind them as the heavy breathing of the man ascending the stairs came to his ears.

Glancing through a crevice between the planks, Morgan saw a short, fat man struggle up on to the landing, and watching him breathlessly he saw him cross the passage and beat a long tattoo on the black door. It opened immediately, and a triangle of bright sunlight fell into the passage. The fat man stood within the deluge of golden sunbeams, and when he lifted his hat before stepping inside the room, the watcher hidden behind the planks had much difficulty in suppressing an exclamation. The left side of the new arrival's face was turned towards the hiding place, and, for the third time that afternoon, Morgan saw a mutilated ear!

"A convention of them," he gasped, as the door closed, leaving him in a state of great excitement.

Here was a mystery deeper than the sea—a mystery upon

which he had a special claim. Fate had chosen him to investigate a weird gathering of persons branded with the same uncommon deformity, and he looked round eagerly to discover a way into the secret chamber.

It was at that moment that a straight iron ladder, fastened to the wall and leading up through a small manhole in the ceiling, attracted Morgan's attention, and he blessed the fat man for driving him to cover. There was just a possibility that another trap door opened into the room where the earmarked brigade was mustering, and his heart beat joyfully. Fate was kind indeed.

With great caution he climbed up into the darkness above and moved slowly over the dusty cross-beams, brushing aside the cobwebs that fell like ropes across his face. Not once did he question his conduct. His curiosity dragged him swiftly forward, and he stumbled on through the thick waves of darkness which welled up around him. The atmosphere was heavy and charged with an odor of garlic that had hidden away in the dark since the house was occupied.

A faint, faraway glow, like a small aureole, showed through the wall of darkness, and the sight acted as a violent stimulant to Morgan's nerves. His surmise was correct. A large ventilator opened into the room to which the fat man had been admitted, and as he crept nearer, moving cautiously on hands and knees, he heard with delight the faint whisperings that came up into the dark recesses beneath the roof. Lying flat upon his stomach he wriggled quietly to the edge of the trap and looked down.

The ceiling was low, and as Morgan looked down into the room he was startled at finding how close he was to the occupants of the chamber. The tall man that he had followed from Jackson Square sat upon a rough dais directly beneath the hole, and so close that Morgan imagined he could touch his head by stretching out his hand. Sitting in front of the dais were five others—one of them the short, fat man that he had seen in the corridor—and a little apart from the five was the young woman whose disfigurement had first excited his curiosity. One glance at her face informed him that her fear had not abated, and mentally he blessed the prying imagination that had scented a mystery in the meeting of the two. Instinctively he felt a hatred for the tall

man and his male companions, and feeling that his instinct was right, he looked for corroborative proof.

Part of the proceedings had evidently been transacted while he was crawling to the opening, and, judging by the tones of the tall man who was then speaking, Morgan surmised that he was just concluding a little speech setting forth the purpose of the gathering.

"It is our duty to avenge," he murmured. "Blood must be shed so that the cause may prosper, and from amongst you the avenger will be chosen, according to the orders of the Brethren of the Inner Circle."

The five men nodded their heads slowly, but the woman only stared stupidly at the speaker. She sat like a model of Horror, but her evident anguish did not appear to stir the pity of her companions.

"Upon the one who draws the number is the duty," continued the speaker. "It is the order of the Brethren that he or she shall be the blessed avenger."

Again the five nodded, and as Morgan peered down at them with an unconquerable feeling of repugnance, he started violently. *The four men sitting with the fat man that he had seen enter the room had the same peculiar disfigurement of the left ear.*

He drew back into the darkness to recover his self-possession. The discovery sickened him. The incident was uncanny. His mind recalled fairy tales of childhood, and he wondered vainly how such a deformity could be common to seven people, and why those seven had gathered together in a dirty, evil-smelling house in prosaic New York.

The five men whispered together when the tall man sat down, and now Morgan fully understood the look of terror upon the face of the woman. With the five, she was called upon to draw lots to decide which one should perform a deed, the nature of which he well understood after listening to the speech of the tall man and studying the look of intense horror with which the woman viewed the preparations the leader was making for the ballot.

Breathing hurriedly, Morgan watched the tall man as that person took six pieces of white paper and slowly marked each one with a number. In the silence the watcher could hear the quick

gasping of the woman as she stared at the cold, bloodthirsty leader, who marked the ballot slips slowly and placed them side by side on the rough pine boards before his seat. He was inexcusably slow, and his actions irritated Morgan. From his perch of observation he strained his eyes to see what was written upon the strips of paper, and what he saw astonished him.

The tall man had marked upon each scrap of paper the figure six!

To Morgan, somewhat familiar with the tricks of the professional ballot faker, it was quite plain that one person in the six was to be unfairly pushed into an assassin's job, and his hatred for the male section of the gathering made him instantly surmise which one of the number would be the victim of the leader's crooked tactics. It was quite evident that the woman was being drawn into the crime vortex by cowardly cunning that made the inquisitive onlooker clench his hands viciously as he looked down.

Very carefully the tall man rolled each marked scrap of paper into a ball and placed them, one by one, in a small china bowl, stirring them round and round with his clawlike fingers as he watched the group. When they were thoroughly mixed he stood up and addressed the others:

"I have numbered these papers from one to six," he lied calmly, "and when each has drawn a paper I will call a number. The holder of that number shall be the person upon whom shall fall the duty which those of the Inner Circle have written of. Now, draw."

He held the bowl up high, and each one of the five men came forward and took a pellet from it, and each returning to his seat, unrolled the scrap and glanced carelessly at the number marked thereon. The woman came last. She stumbled forward a pace, and the man held the bowl towards her. Her white hand groped blindly till it touched the basin, she clutched the last little pilule, and then, staggering back to her seat, examined it with trembling fingers.

"You have each drawn a paper and examined the number?" queried the tall man.

The five men nodded. The woman's lips quivered nervously as if she was muttering a prayer to ward off the fate she dreaded.

"Then I will call a number," continued the master of ceremonies, "and the person holding that number will stand up."

In the moment of silence that followed the remark, Morgan thought that the occupants of the room would hear the wild pounding of his heart. The five men sat with folded arms, stolid, scowling brutes; the tall man stood upright, cool and unconcerned, while the woman appeared to be on the verge of collapse.

"*Six!*" cried the leader.

The word was jerked out like a verbal bullet. Not one of the men moved, and as Morgan peered at their impassive faces, he wondered how many crooked ballots the five had participated in.

The tall man's questioning gaze fell upon the woman, and she seemed to wither up under the glare of his gray eyes. She tried to rise, but the effort was beyond her, and she sank back upon the chair, sobbing wildly.

"You have the six?" cried the leader.

The woman inclined her head, and her sobbing echoed through the room. The five others regarded her with cool indifference, but the tall man straightened up his shoulders and commanded her to stop crying.

Morgan cursed in whispers. The infamous manner in which the ballot had been conducted maddened him, but his own helplessness was only too apparent. He rolled quietly into a hollow between two beams and watched the scene.

"You are the instrument of vengeance," screamed the leader, pointing his bony finger at the sobbing woman. "You are the one chosen to do the bidding of the Inner Circle. Blood must be shed for blood."

He paused a moment in his wild tirade, and the interval of silence was suddenly broken by a sound that made the perspiration start from Morgan. It was a rending, tearing sound of splintering matchwood, and with a muttered curse he tried to fling himself into a position of safety, but the rotten ceiling had given way beneath his weight!

Morgan's fear seemed to be small compared to the fear shown by the men below. As the cloud of dust fell upon them, the tall man uttered a warning yell of "Police," and with a shower of Slav curses the six sprang at the door leading into the passage.

Morgan caught a glimpse of their struggling bodies as he crashed through the flimsy woodwork; he saw for an instant the white face of the woman, then his head struck heavily against the dais upon which the tall man had been sitting, and he remembered no more.

. . . . . .

Eight days afterwards Frank Morgan recovered his senses in the accident ward of St. Jude's Hospital. He looked stupidly round him, speculating as to his whereabouts. Then the memory of the unfortunate slip through the ceiling of the house in Bleecker Street came to his mind and he understood. What had happened to the woman? The thought of her danger made him struggle to attract the attention of the nurse. He raised himself upon his elbow, and the white-capped woman came quickly towards him, with finger uplifted.

But her cautions had no effect. Morgan would speak, and he started to babble of the incident and impress upon the nurse the necessity of warning the police lest the girl should be pressed into committing a crime.

His description of the earmarked girl roused the nurse.

"A young woman as you describe has called here every morning to see you and bring flowers," she said soothingly. "This is about the time she calls, and if you promise me that you will not talk I will go and see."

Morgan waited some forty minutes, wondering all the time if the girl of the ballot was his visitor. He had no female friends in the city, but he could not understand why his condition interested the beautiful woman who had drawn the unlucky six.

At last the nurse returned, and Morgan's excited condition startled her.

"You mustn't excite yourself," she cried.

"Did she come?" gasped the patient.

The nurse was alarmed.

"Yes," she answered; "but when I told her that you were conscious she refused to come in. Instead she wrote and sealed this note for you to read when you are better."

Morgan made a wild snatch at the letter and seized it. Tearing it open hurriedly he read the following:—

To My Kind Rescuer:

To you I owe my life. I am the one who was chosen, but I knew not by what foul means until we all had run away. When I returned with an ambulance and a doctor, I found the fraudulent ballots. I am so pleased to hear that you are better, my preserver! I do not know what brought you there—I think it was God's hand—but I will explain the gathering. During the Kishinef riots we seven and many others were ill-treated by the Cossacks, and the deformity, which you must have noticed, came about when we were all nailed by the left ear to a long plank, and afterwards released by the brutal use of a Cossack blade.

When I came to this country those others, who sought vengeance, found me and forced me to join the society, and only for your interference I would now be on my way to Russia to do their evil bidding. Now I am safe. I have found friends who will protect me; those others have fled, thinking you belonged to the Russian Secret Police; and now that you are on the high road to health I am happy—so happy. My blessings upon you, my friend, and may all fortune be thine. Farewell.

THECKLA.

Morgan folded the sheet, and with feeble fingers pushed it under the pillow and turned his face to the wall.

"The days of knight errantry are still with us," he murmured, "but I would like to meet Theckla. Gee! doesn't my head ache."

Then he fell into an easy sleep, and the nurse tiptoed quietly away.

Arguing for New York.*

BY HOMER CROY.

"THEY may not have as many shootin's, Black Handin's, millionaires marrying milliners, bombs, bums and boodle, and the buildings may be stretched a few stories by the time they get here, and the girls in the music shows may not kick half as high as we hear it up here," effused Bill Withers, propping his elbow on a laprobe in his livery barn at Hallsville and fingering in his paper-lined sack, "but notwithstanding, nevertheless, and to the contrary New York has got it on Hallsville in more ways than once. Comin' directly to the point, without circumlocutin', wastin' wanton words, beatin' around the shumake, or bringin' coals to New Castle after they've put in steam heat — there's Uncle Ase."

So we nodded polite and crossed our legs.

"As you don't know, Uncle Ase used to run the feed-yard here and was always chairman of the Fourth of July celebration and could mop his brow with his handkerchief and at the same time says 'the irate and irascible British lion!' Well, Uncle Ase was the poker prank of this neck of the Pinchot controversy. He was the handiest man with cards I ever see. He could do all of them vanishing tricks where now-you-see-it-now-you-don't and be wondering if Battling Nelson took part in the Boxer Rebellion. Before wastin' my time playin' poker with him I would jes' give him all my money and personal belongings and borrow my watch back.

"Sometimes a traveling man or an actor or some other foreigner would drift into Hallsville and mildly mention as they would like to while away the time with a sociable game of draw poker. I used to look at them and wonder if they had a fam'ly. It would take a lot of urgin' to get Uncle Ase to set in, but jes' to

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entertain the visitors he would finally give in and take a hand with an expression of his face as if it had been taken from the frontispiece of 'Mother, Home and Heaven.' He would toy along with the visitors, them lettin' him win the first three or four hands to get him feelin' confident, and then they would kind of clear their throats as if to say, 'It's time now for us to bring in the sheaves.' But Uncle Ase was Maud Muller with a patent self-dumping and winrowin' rake and continued to make hay with the same innocent, confidin' expression on his face, childishly surprised and pleased each time the chips came over to his corner. Right in the middle of a game he would stop and ask some technical point as if garnering up a bit of useful information. Then he'd make them say it was beginner's luck. When the traveling man suddenly found he'd have to catch a train and the actor remembered the important letter he had to get off, Uncle Ase would offer to give them back their money, which of course they wouldn't accept, thus makin' sure of them the next time they come to town.

"So wings begun to sprout on Uncle Ase's shoulders. He stood up on the Himalaya of Hallsville, shaded his eyes with his hand and looked for other worlds to conquer. Then one day he come to me and says, 'Bill, I've found an unconquered geographical area — Van Demon's Land.'

"'New York?' I asks.

"'The same,' he says. 'I believe I'll go down there and stock up with gold bricks. Don't you want a share?'

"So I put in fifty and Gus Gribble comes across with another fifty, and Uncle Ase puts on a black hat without a crease and takes a black canvas round-shouldered grip with a tin handle that rattled when you set it down, and goes to New York.

"The first one gets him in New Jersey at their seaport town — oh, yes, Hoboken — and before he had got to the Astor House they looked like a Mormon convention. Uncle Ase explained gently to them that he was very busy and had to see the Statue of Liberty and the Natural Museum of Arts before any social pleasures. The convention said they'd been appointed by the mayor to show him a good time and called a taxicab. They wore out two taxicabs and finally chartered a sight-seeing car.

"Uncle Ase said he'd pay for everything and every time he drew out his log of greenbacks the bodyguard would wiggle their fingers and water around the eyes, but they'd push it back in his inside pocket and toss some bills to the waiters and chauffeurs careless like, as if money irritated their fingers.

"That night after they had left the show, where they set between the elbow of the first violinist and the toes of the prima donna wearing tights half one color and half something else, one of the men says, 'Wouldn't you like to come up to our club for a social chat?'

"'Ain't it gettin' kinder late?' asks Uncle Ase, having a hand-to-hand with a yawn.

"'It ain't ever late when good fellers get together,' says the man, sentimental-like. 'It's so refreshin' to have an out-of-town friend here that ain't satiated with New York's round of revelry. Did you ever hear the funny story about the lady and the bathing suit? We'll call a taxi and tell it to you.'

"The club was all fixed up like a queen's boodore with velvet chairs, gold tassels, and electric fans that would throw a zephyr in your face and disappear for half a minute, and free lunches served by a negro in a white apron and a boy's-size coat on the arm of your chair.

"'What 'll you have?' asks one of the men in a See America First tone.

"'Why, I guess I'll take a cup of cocoa,' says Uncle Ase as innocent as Mary's pet.

"'I mean what kind of game would you like to set in?'

"'I ain't much on anything outside of crocono,' says Uncle Ase, 'but if you've got some poker chips that ain't in use I might try my hand.'

"'The rules of the club is,' says the man with thin, white hands, 'that you can't buy less than fifty dollars' worth of chips. That's the reason it's so exclusive.'

"Uncle Ase turned it over a minute. 'Well,' he says, boyishly, as if afraid to back out, 'give me one set.'

"Uncle Ase picked up the cards and tried to run the deck, but spilled it and blushed in such becoming confusion that one of the men had to choke himself from saying, 'Get a basket.'

"The first hand around, Mr. Johnson took it — that's what he said it was even if sometimes the others did call him Mac — and kinder looked at Uncle Ase like as if he wondered if he had a confiding wife. Uncle Ase winced as if it was taking away his confiding wife's Sunday dress, but the next hand the chips gravitated over to Uncle Ase's corner. As the bait stacked up Uncle Ase's face began to widen till it wrinkled the back of his neck. Then one of the men winked at Mr. Johnson as if to say, 'Le's reel in and land the sucker,' and dropped their entertainin' expression. But the chips kept coming over and climbing up on top of each other on Uncle Ase's corner till he looked like a knight behind an embattled castle wall, or however you say it.

"Purty soon the men were jumping up and running over to the cashier for more chips; then in a few minutes the castle wall would have a pergola and a lookout on it. All night the Marathon continued, Uncle Ase cashing in now and then just to have room to be sociable.

"'Don't you feel sleepy?' asked Mr. Johnson about noon.

"'No,' says Uncle Ase, 'this coffee has got me stirred up,' and Mr. Johnson walked over to the cashier slow and halting like.

"All afternoon and until evening the castle building went on, Uncle Ase gettin' to be a machine with just one motion — rakin' in.

"'Well, I'm all in,' said Mr. Johnson, slidin' down in his chair and puttin' out his legs stiff. 'It's a good thing this joint has the rule of giving you supper and a dollar when you go broke.'

"As quick as Uncle Ase had relieved the other fellow of his plethora of plush he got up and cashed in — six thousand dollars. The cashier gave it to him in six bills, and Uncle Ase stood there fumbling it kind of nervous. Never before had he ever seen that much money in one group. He run his fingers over it and touched his thumb to his lip and caressed it again. Then the responsibility of taking care of that amount of money made him trembly and he begun to think himself a lamb in the wilds of New York, and all the stories of pickpockets and thugs he had ever heard came rushin' back to him. He folded it up and stuck it in his round pocketbook with the three clasps, but he knew that he could never get back to Hallsville with it that

way. He knew that the first jam he went through the wad would be gone. So he set down in the corner and thought out how to play safe. He sent the negro out to a drugstore and tipped him till he could say 'Thank you' only once.

"Then to show the men it wouldn't be any use to set a pickpocket on his trail, he called Mr. Johnson in a bedroom. 'I want you to put this money on me,' says Uncle Ase. 'I'm beginnin' to realize I ain't fitten to take care of myself in a big city.'

"'You ain't so worse,' says Mr. Johnson quick-like.

"Uncle Ase peels off his coat and shirt, unrolls the paper and hands Mr. Johnson a porous plaster. 'Now,' says Uncle Ase, 'I want you to oblige me by stickin' these bills on my back under this plaster so I can't possibly lose them.'

"'This is one on me,' laughs Mr. Johnson at Uncle Ase's simplicity.

"'It's six on me,' comes back Uncle Ase like an actor.

"Mr. Johnson sticks them on and after Uncle Ase had got in his shirt and coat he hands him a bill that makes Mr. Johnson hold his hand tenderly. Then Uncle Ase calls a taxicab and goes to the deepot.

"I gets this telegram the next morning:

"'Am coming with bills on.—Uncle Ase.'

"So us men that was financially interested was down to the train to meet him and we all rode up town in the hack as big as Chautauqua lecturers. We comes down here to this very office, and Uncle Ase, as excited as a kid, skins out of his shirt. We gets a sponge and some hot water and he stands it manfully. So do we."

Bill Withers stops and bites up a straw.

"Yes?" we asked with a question mark.

"Well," he said meditatively, "that's the reason I think that even if New York ain't got buildin's fifty stories tall, girls that can kick as high as a man can reach, and barbershops where they charge thirty-five cents for a shave, it has got it on Hallsville just the same. They was one dollar bills."

The Soul of a Crow.*

BY MICHAEL WHITE.

A MAN who wilfully cuts loose from a personally conducted tour through India because the anticipated spice of adventure is lacking should not blame the gentleman in charge of his party for risks, which nearly caused Brownson to spend the rest of his life under a judicial sentence of superintending the manufacture of carpets in jail.

It is to be remembered that if tigers, cobras, and sudden death from cholera do not lurk around every corner, there are other things to beware of in India; particularly for venturesome persons like Brownson, who was tired of ancient tombs and temples, and wanted to see what lay off the beaten track. So as Brownson vowed he knew how to take care of himself, and there was no law by which his conductor could force him to remain with the party, the idea was his to carry out just as he pleased.

Possibly he imagined a well-filled pocket-book would perform the same service in remote India, that is, half a dozen miles from any city, that it would do in less civilized countries. In that respect it remained for him to be enlightened, for India is rather over-civilized according to certain ethics peculiar to itself.

So Brownson went off on his side trip, promising to catch up with his party in a day or two, and the hope held high of securing an unusual experience to relate. Thus an afternoon found him deposited at the wayside railway station of Chandni, in the midst of a crowd of sheet-clad chattering natives, who absorbed in their own affairs, gave no attention to the Feringhee stranger. Brownson had selected Chandni because it is not mentioned in guide books, is seldom visited by travelers, yet for all that he had been told it was a place of historic interest. Perhaps it is, though a chain of quite exciting incidents intervened to prevent his confirming the report.

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As little could be seen from the station except a plain of sun-baked soil, stirred by the slightest current of air into a haze of fine dust, Brownson tackled the native station master for information. From that source he didn't learn much.

The native station master gave Brownson to understand that his official position required him to sell tickets — not more or less — and that it was no business of his to act as a local directory for wandering Feringhee Sahibs. Still, if the Sahib insisted upon going to Chandni, a string of camels setting forth with slow protesting movement across the plain would lead the way thither. No, there were no public conveyances, guides, or hotels in the district, but no one would interfere with the Sahib if he chose to explore it. In a sense the last statement was very literal truth. That done, he would be pleased to sell the Sahib tickets.

Then he shut himself in his office box, refusing to hold further converse on the subject, which, to his mind, presented merely a phase of the usual Sahib madness. Otherwise, why should a man leave his family to wander up and down the earth without money recompense or to gain merit by way of a pilgrimage?

Brownson's mind being decided on reaching Chandni, he set out after the camels and presently discovered that Indian by-ways are not the most enjoyable on earth for pedestrian exercise. From under his feet the dust rose in clouds, toning his garments and the exposed parts of his person a uniform shade of brown in harmony with the landscape. It also went in with his breath, parching his nostrils and throat, and hence a first cue of what was to follow. To escape more dust in the track of the camels, he tramped on ahead, and thus came up with a group of young girls returning from a village well. They proceeded, chatting and laughing to a jingling accompaniment of brass anklets, and with water jars poised gracefully on their heads — slender admirably proportioned figures that would have delighted the eye of a sculptor.

Brownson drew near unheard and touched one of the girls lightly on the shoulder, then with a gesture endeavored to make known his want. Had he stabbed her in the back the result could hardly have been more poignant. She started to one side, casting on him a horrified look, then taking to her heels fled with

the agility of a fawn. Her companions grasped their water jars in both hands and ran with terror in their feet.

Brownson stood watching them with astonishment, for he could conceive of nothing in his action to cause the girls such fright, in fact had intended to pay liberally both in coin and compliments for the drink of water. But as an explanation seemed unlikely, he went on into the village.

In passing through the main street he noticed an open stall upon which oranges, sweet cakes, *ghee,* grain and other food were offered for sale. This reminded Brownson of an appetite as well as his thirst, and the sweet cakes with the oranges looked promising. So he turned aside to the stall, and by way of a sample picked up a sweet cake in addition to a couple of oranges.

From the back of the stall a howl smote upon his ear, while before his eyes rose a wild gesticulating figure. The howl was repeated, with Brownson wondering at this new development of native custom, or madness as it appeared to him. It served at any rate to bring the entire population of the village, which included a holy cow, toddling little nude youngsters, and cur dogs jostling each other in haste to the stall, and there they stood in a half circle, gazing in a mixture of resentment and indecision at Brownson, while the proprietor went on with his vehement ravings.

As it occurred to Brownson that the man might have taken him for a thief, he held out a handful of small change, with an invitation to take the price of the rest of the provender to which he proceeded to help himself. Instead, the man in a frenzy of excitement seized a bamboo pole and began thrusting it vigorously at Brownson's chest. Brownson caught a lunge in his hand, deftly wrenched the pole from the other's grasp, and returned a smart rap on the shoulder to teach respectful behavior toward a customer.

The onlookers evidently took this act as a signal for starting a riot. Stones began to hurl through the air, and Brownson's position was momentarily becoming less enviable, when a uniformed native policeman pushed his way to the center of combat. He swept the excited crowd back with a wave

of his official arm, and deferentially addressed Brownson.

"The Sahib will please permit himself to be conducted from this place. It is not safe for him to remain. As the Sahib will see, the people are greatly enraged. He had better come to the magistrate's house until the disturbance is over."

Brownson, feeling entirely innocent of wronging, thought it best to accept the policeman's suggestion, intending to lay a vigorous protest of his treatment in the village before the magistrate. So, with the crowd following, he was escorted by the policeman to a bungalow set in a compound at a short distance from the village. While Brownson was ushered into the presence of the magistrate the crowd took squatting positions on the edge of the compound.

Brownson discovered the magistrate to be a very dark black-whiskered gentleman of the "great" Bengali nation, and, though only a sub-deputy, gave himself more airs than a Chief Justice of the High Court. On Brownson's entrance a fat smile of gratification illuminated the magistrate's features at the heaven-sent good fortune of sitting in judgment on a Sahib. He quickly summoned to the scene his clerks and four or five other policemen — Sahibs of the road-wandering species being well known to display extraordinary resistance to native authority.

Meanwhile, Brownson had not lost time in setting forth his grievance, demanding to know how it was that law and order were not better preserved in that village. The magistrate heard the policeman's statement and then replied with a curious mingling of self-conscious pride and due regard for the fact that Brownson *was* a Sahib, even if, judging from appearances, of the *chota,* that is, the little or unimportant variety. It must be understood that *burra* or great Sahibs generally travel in pomp and circumstance and are rarely encountered on foot.

"The Sahib will please to know," began the magistrate, "that by laying hands on the food in the merchant's shop, that excellent man is ruined."

"Why, how in the world can that be?" returned Brownson. "I was willing to pay well for everything I took."

"It is evident the Sahib does not understand," went on the magistrate. "No disrespect is meant to the Sahib, but he must

know the people of this village are of good caste, and that by them he is regarded," the magistrate glanced warningly at the policemen, "he is regarded as possessing the soul of a crow. When the Sahib dies these people think he will again take on the form of that unclean bird. Every Feringhee Sahib is so in the eyes of these people. Therefore his touch contaminated all the food in that unfortunate merchant's shop, and there is no use for it now but to fling to the crows."

Brownson was so amazed at this disclosure that for some moments words failed to express his feelings adequately. Before he could fittingly rise to the occasion, a small procession approached the magistrate's veranda, assisting a man who crept forward in what was evidently the extremity of pain. On the man's entrance Brownson recognized him as the stall-keeper, with head swathed in bandages and what was visible of his face scarred and blood stained. For a make-up of that kind the natives use pigments very adroitly, also the life fluid of a freshly killed chicken. But of this device Brownson, of course, knew nothing. With a groan the stall-keeper sank down on the floor before the magistrate, while comments of pity proceeded from the friends, to find a reflection of sympathy on the magistrate's face. When the magistrate had enjoined silence, the stall-keeper told his story in a weak voice, being ably assisted at doubtful points by his friends. Finally when he was done, the magistrate smacked his lips and addressed Brownson.

"I must inform the Sahib that, for him, this is a very bad case. This man says that the Sahib not only contaminated his stock, but when he politely requested the Sahib to go away, the Sahib stabbed him several times with a knife. These truthful people witnessed the Sahib's violence, and will swear to it in a higher court. I am compelled therefore to send the Sahib under a police escort to the jail at Chandni."

"But, Great Scott!" exclaimed Brownson. "I say it's all a tissue of lies. How could I stab that old scoundrel when I didn't have a knife?"

"Perhaps the Sahib has a pistol?" suggested the wily magistrate. He thought it best to discover if Brownson was armed before he gave the order for the police to set upon the prisoner.

Brownson thrust his hand into a pocket and drew forth one of those little electric lamps, very useful when one is not quite sure of the location of matches in a strange hotel room. It was growing dusk, and as he clicked the switch the little light winked and flashed under the magistrate's nose.

"That's the most dangerous weapon I've got," he responded defiantly.

The magistrate stared at the unfamiliar object for a half moment, crawled cautiously out of his chair, muttered some words, and disappeared behind a curtain. The clerks promptly followed, and the policemen joined the witnesses in what might be termed a hasty exit. As to the injured stall-keeper, he rose up, cast a beseeching look on Brownson, and scrambled out with surprising vigor considering his loss of blood.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" ejaculated Brownson. "If this doesn't beat all for a court sitting. What next, I wonder!"

Apparently there was not to be a next, so he strolled out by the way he came, to find not a human being in sight. As the hint of a jail awaiting him in Chandni was not an alluring prospect, and falling darkness was making the road thither uncertain, he decided to return to the railway station.

He passed through the village without annoyance, and reached the station, feeling that he was being shadowed though no one actually came within his vision. He at first thought the station master had also fled, but from hushed sounds reckoned he had barricaded himself in his box. So he sat down to wait for a train, and after a little while observed that a gathering of white figures, squatting at a safe distance, presumably represented the village population come to give him a send-off.

After some hours a night train rolled into the station. Brownson climbed aboard and wandered into a compartment in which an Englishman of important bearing was being served with supper. Brownson sat down on the opposite bunk, casting envious eyes on the Englishman's meal. Presently the engine shrieked, and the train pulled slowly out of the station. As if in response to the engine's note, a howl went up on the night air.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the Englishman, starting, "what's up?"

"I guess," remarked Brownson, "it must be some of my newly acquired friends wishing me good luck."

The Englishman looked at Brownson, a few sentences explaining Brownson's position were exchanged, and the Englishman invited Brownson to join in his supper. The Englishman's servants addressed him as Excellency, therefore he must have been a *burra* or great, Sahib, perhaps a Lieutenant-Governor. In any case he was hugely amused with the story of Brownson's adventure, chuckling with delight when it came to the hasty adjournment of the native magistrate's court.

"But believe me; we have not heard the last of it," he said. "I am curious to see what will happen when we reach Bramabad, the provincial administrative center. It's just as well you have fallen in with a bigger man than Ralston of the Police at that place, because he's wonderfully energetic when tipped off on a case of this kind."

When the train stopped at Bramabad, it would seem that his Excellency's forecast was well founded. A strong detachment of police had been drawn up on the platform, and preparations evidently made to capture a suspect of importance. Presently the door of his Excellency's compartment was opened, and an English officer in police uniform requested permission to enter. By the same token Brownson had strolled in without that formality.

"By all means, Ralston," nodded his Excellency in his most genial manner. He had been needlessly bothered by Ralston on several occasions, and welcomed an opportunity to subdue a too officious aspiration.

"The fact is, sir," explained Ralston, fixing a scrutinizing stare on Brownson, "we have received a wire from the Chandni district informing us that a Russian spy, under arrest for inciting the people to sedition, attempted to blow up the native submagistrate's bungalow with a bomb of some kind or other. It is believed he escaped on this train. If — er — your Excellency should have been persuaded into — "

"My dear Ralston," interposed his Excellency. "When will you learn to set a proper value on native veracity? Here is your Russian spy — an American gentleman traveling for

pleasure, and his bomb is nothing more than a pocket electric lamp, which, it seems, nearly frightened your worthy native sub-deputy to death. This gentleman has explained everything while dining with me, and I can assure you is a capital fellow. Pray don't keep the train waiting longer than is necessary, or a deputation will be waiting overtime for me at another station."

Ralston bowed himself out with hasty apologies, and the train sped on its course.

"It looks rather like a narrow shave from a whole lot of trouble," remarked Brownson.

"If you had been held at that native magistrate's much longer," reflected his Excellency, "they would probably have produced a corpse and charged you with being the murderer. My Word! then you would have been in for it, because witnesses can always be supplied at a trifling expense. But as it is, you will certainly have something unusual to tell when you catch up with your party."

The Parable of Mrs. Hotchkiss Who Wanted an Incubator Baby.*

BY C. M. HOFFMAN-SCHERER.

R. and Mrs. Hotchkiss had been married twelve years and the stork hadn't called at their home in all that time. As a matter of fact, it couldn't. Mrs. Hotchkiss wouldn't stay home long enough to give the poor bird a chance. When she wasn't at a pink tea or an opera, she was at some pleasure resort — doing Europe, maybe. To be sure, she reached home occasionally, but not to stay. Her coachman explained it thus: "Faith, an' she comes home jist so she can lave agin. If it worn't that she wants to lave agin, I dunna would she iver come home."

No self-respecting stork could be expected to bring a present to a lady who was not there to receive it, and the stork never had. Possibly it could have swooped down and left her a package between the time she came home on one train and the time she departed on the next one, but the fact remains that it never had. It might have felt that a present from a stork would not be well cared for when the lady of the house was away all the time, or it may be that the wise bird thought others would appreciate a present from a stork more than Mrs. Hotchkiss would. Anyway, the stork had never called on her, and the big house contained many servants, but no baby.

It happened that Mrs. Hotchkiss witnessed a play in which a baby caused a husband and wife to become reconciled after a quarrel in which each had said hateful things to the other. She witnessed this play soon after one of many quarrels between herself and Mr. Hotchkiss. She did not want to part from him, but something was always happening to cause a quarrel

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